

Urban Air Study-Paterson Communication Strategy

Background on Issue

USEPA awarded \$495,242 to NJDEP to develop tools so that the NJDEP and the community can better understand the types and sources of air toxics in typical NJ urban settings. NJDEP's air monitoring sites across the state characterize air quality from different types of land use. These sites include: Elizabeth, a mobile site, Camden an urban site, New Brunswick, a suburban site, and Chester, a rural site. Paterson was chosen for this study because it is a good example of a mixed use setting in which industrial, mobile, commercial and residential land uses are in close proximity to each other and NOT because of observed or suspected air quality problems.

The Paterson study set out to measure 132 common air toxics that are expected to be found in a typical mixed-use urban area. The measurements were made at three sites in Paterson and one background site in Chester, NJ about every six days between November 2005 and December 2006. The draft Final Technical Report was submitted to USEPA late last year.

Immediate Issues of Concern/Controversy

Two weeks ago, the environmental community raised questions about the purpose and results of the DEP study. They suggested that the results of the study indicated increased cancer risk and that NJDEP was withholding the information from the public. NJDEP received phone calls and letters from the Mayor of Paterson and concerned stakeholder groups asking for an explanation. NJDEP responded to these concerns by offering to meet with them and the public to share the study results. The NJDEP enforcement program is investigating the possible source(s) of the elevated p-dichlorobenzene. NJDEP is requesting funds from USEPA to conduct additional monitoring in the area where the elevated level of p-dichlorobenzene was observed.

DEP Programs Involved

Office of Science (lead)

Bureau of Air Toxics- Environmental Regulation

Office of Constituent Services

Office of legislative Affairs

Press Office

Office of Local Government Services

Compliance and Enforcement

Environmental Justice

Other State or Federal Agencies Involved

USEPA
Region II EPA

Communication Strategy/Method Overview:

Press

1. Press office will reach out to key press to explain the study prior to public release.
2. Press advisory to be issued on Feb 9 alerting the press of the Feb. 10 public meeting in the City Hall of Paterson.
3. Press release to be issued Feb. 10 to announce the release of the report which will be posted on our website that day, along with a citizen's guide/FAQs.

Web

1. Study report to be posted on Feb 10
2. Lay person's guide/FAQ to be posted on Feb 10

Tools

Kerry Kirk Pflugh to work with Alan Stern and Linda Bonanno on lay person's guide/FAQ, summary and public meeting presentation.

Community Outreach

1. Linda J. Bonanno, Ph.D., the project manager, met with USEPA Region 2 on Wed, Jan 27 to go over the results of the study and receive comments on the draft report. **(complete)**
2. NJDEP will notify DHSS about the study, its results and the meetings should questions get directed to them. NJDEP will share report, citizen's guide and FAQ with DHSS to provide consistent information/message. **(In progress)**
3. Jason Varano to coordinate a phone briefing with Mayor Torres of Paterson prior to the Feb 10 public official briefing in Paterson. **(Offer has been made)**
4. Public Official Briefing on Feb. 10, 10 a.m. with Mayor Torres and invited guests including Congressman Pascrell, Senator Girgenti, Dr. Donnie Evans the State Superintendent of Paterson Public schools, Paterson Environmental Inspector, Paterson Health Officer, Passaic County Health Department, Paterson Housing Authority and a number of elected officials as invited by the Mayor. **(scheduled)**
5. Public meeting 5:30 p.m. City Hall, Feb. 10 with citizens and community groups. **(scheduled)**
6. Jeanne Herb to contact EPA with outreach plan and message and confirm EPA's ongoing role in the effort. **(scheduled)**
7. Prior to Feb 10 meetings, Jeanne Herb to reach out to Jeff Tittel, Dave Pringle and members of the EJ commission to brief them on the study results.
8. Jason Varano to coordinate with City on taking the lead on community notification. **(completed)**

9. Maria Franco to provide J contacts to Jeanne Herb for phone briefing. **(completed)**
10. NJDEP will provide our contacts lists to the Mayors office to be included in their notification procedures. **(completed)**

Key messages:

1. The air quality in Paterson is consistent with that of the entire state. Of the 132 air toxics selected to be analyzed in this study, only one toxic, p-dichlorobenzene was elevated for two months out of the 14 months of monitoring at one site in Paterson as compared to concentrations measured at the four other NJDEP air toxics monitoring locations, i.e., Elizabeth, Chester, Camden, and New Brunswick.
2. There is no immediate public health concern. With the exception of p-dichlorobenzene, the cancer risk from air toxics is comparable to the rest of the state. There is no long or short term noncancer health risk.
3. The cancer risk from p-dichlorobenzene is calculated under the assumption of a lifetime exposure. The cancer risk calculated at the one site in Paterson where the elevated concentrations occurred would be 205 in a million.
4. Paterson was selected as a study site because of its mix of industrial, commercial, mobile and residential land use in a concentrated area not because of any particular concerns about air quality there.
5. The purpose of the study was to better understand the nature of urban air toxics and to develop improved tools and methods to characterize air quality in urban communities.
6. The elevated concentrations of p-dichlorobenzene were measured at one site in Paterson during two consecutive months of the 14 month monitoring period. The levels dropped back to those measured during the other 12 months of the study.
7. The levels measured in Paterson during the 12 months observed were similar to those measured in other parts of NJ.

Anticipated questions

1. Is the air in Paterson dangerous?
2. What do I need to do to protect myself?
3. Are my children at greater risk?
4. Is it safe to send my children to their schools?
5. What are you doing about this?
6. Why did it take so long for you to tell us about the study results?

Interested/Involved Officials, Groups, Citizens

Paterson Act Congregations Individuals

Council President Jeffery Jones

Councilman Anthony E. Davis, First Ward

Councilman Aslon Goow, Second Ward

Councilman William C. McKoy, Third Ward

Councilwoman Vera Ames-Garnes, Fourth Ward
Councilwoman Julio Tavarez, Fifth Ward
Councilman Andre Sayegh, Sixth Ward
Councilman Kenneth M. Morris, Jr., At-Large
Councilman Rigo Rodriguez, At-Large
U.S. Congressman William J. Pascrell, Jr.
New Jersey Senator John Girgenti
New Jersey Assemblywomen Nellie Pou and Eleese Evans
Passaic County Board of Chosen Freeholder Director Bruce James
State Supt. of Paterson Public Schools Dr. Donnie W. Evans
Irma Gorham, Executive Director, Paterson Housing Authority
Paterson Health Officer Trevor Weigle
Paterson Chief Environmental Inspector Violeta Goode
Nilda I. Torres, Director, Dept. of Human Services
Community and religious groups
EJ Council members
Passaic County Health Department
Local and State Environmental groups
Concerned citizens